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RESEARCH ARTICLE

The impact of restorative approaches on well-being: An evaluation of happiness and engagement in schools

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Advocates of restorative approaches (RA) often testify as to the positive benefits associated with participants' well-being. A major confounding issue is the ability to evaluate such claims due to the flexibility of practices and delivery, thus making firm conclusions regarding the impact of RA on well-being particularly difficult. The current research evaluates the potential effects on well-being, specifically, happiness and school engagement. Three different RA models are evaluated using standard psychometric measures to assess the impact on the measured outcomes. Results indicate RA is likely to influence outcomes measure only in very specific contexts.

1 | INTRODUCTION

The use of Restorative Approaches (RA) in education is a rapidly expanding practice; its inception began with a shift from using Restorative Justice (RJ) within the Criminal Justice System (CJS), growing into schools in the early 1990s (Morrison, 2011). RA is generally defined as a form of conflict resolution by which the offender, victim, and other interested parties participate in a process to resolve conflict (Morrison, 2002; United Nations, 2000), stressing the values of reparation (material and psychological), and the importance of relationships and community (Pranis, 2011). For nearly a decade, there has been an impetus to incorporate restorative processes across all youth offending intervention strategies, including programs delivered in the education sector (Youth Justice Board, 2009). Hence, the current research will explore the implementation and delivery of restorative programs in three schools through the efforts of the local Youth Offending Teams (YOTs).

The implementation of RA has been widely accepted as a constructive measure toward increasing positive behavior, reducing negative conduct, and thus preventing future conflict in school (Gonzalez, 2012). Evaluations consistently point to a range of metrics, such as increased attendance,

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better grades, less victimization, and overall incidents of conflict, in schools advocating RA-based policies (Armour, 2014; Kokotsaki, 2013; Morrison, 2002). Additionally, researchers and restorative advocates state there are a number of positive psychological outcomes, including improved individual well-being, for example:

It has been proven...it creates a happier safer school, that deals effectively with conflict... (RestorativeJustice4Schools, 2015).

These inclusive [RA] practices have increased engagement in students... (Croxford, 2010, p. 34).

Despite these and many other positive claims of improvement in a variety of measures following implementation, the evidentiary support for such statements is difficult to evaluate empirically. Indeed, many of the assertions are more anecdotal in nature, leaving researchers calling for more rigorous evaluation studies of restorative practices in schools (Acosta et al., 2016), including the use of standardized instruments (Rugge & Scott, 2009). Therefore, the present research evaluates two areas of psychological well-being, including happiness and school engagement, using established psychometric scales within a quasi-experimental research design. Firstly, this research considers if RA improves participant well-being; secondly, it assesses what type of restorative model (whole school, proactive or reactive) is likely to be most effective in this domain. To supplement the outcome measures, additional qualitative data are used to monitor the implementation process and add further contextual factors for continuing research.

2 | MODELS OF RESTORATIVE PRACTICES IN EDUCATION

One of the key complications in accurately evaluating and comparing RA-based interventions is the lack of an accepted and operationalized definition of RJ/approaches in the literature (Daly, 2002; Latimer, Dowden, & Muise, 2005). On the other hand, scholars note that the absence of a regulated definition allows for flexibility within the practice, itself a beneficial hallmark of the restorative movement (Braithwaite, 2002; González, Sattler, & Buth, 2018). Due to this ambiguity, there are a wide range of practices that fall under the restorative umbrella. For example, within the education system these can be broken into *proactive* and *reactive* practices; the general consensus in the literature suggests a whole-school approach, incorporating both proactive and reactive practices, to be potentially the most beneficial (DuRose & Skinns, 2014; Morrison, 2011).

Proactive practices encourage positive communities that promote healthy relationships through averting potential conflict. Proactive practices largely involve integrating restorative techniques into daily school interactions, resulting in a positive change to school culture over time (Hopkins, 2002). Such practices are guided by the values of trust, respect, and tolerance, with the intention of promoting positive relationships in school (Hopkins, 2004). Practically, these exercises include communication strategies (such as the use of “restorative” questions), being respectful, adopting a supportive tone, and the use of “warm” body language. As a result, these primary prevention strategies become part of the everyday discourse of school life in an attempt to avoid conflict in the first instance and are achieved by creating an environment that supports positive relationships, interactions, and active participation in school life (Acosta et al., 2016; Hopkins, 2002).

While proactive measures are regarded as “forward facing,” reactive “backward facing” practices are often utilized as a response to a specific conflict (McCall, 2014), ranging from informal responses such as “corridor” conferences between students to more formal restorative conferences. Formal restorative conferences are arguably the most recognized practice of the restorative movement and are often

avored in schools due to their identifiable training components and more quantifiable results (McCall, 2014; Morrison, 2011). However, solely utilizing reactive practices is frequently criticized for leading to “pockets” of use, for example, being confined to a single year group or with certain cohorts of students (DuRose & Skinnis, 2014). Sherman and Strang (2007) state that while a whole-school approach is advantageous, they also acknowledge there is a general lack of advice on which practices specifically are needed. Additionally, due to the dearth of operationalized descriptions in the restorative literature, each school is open to interpret the approach in its own unique manner. Creating distinctive restorative programs to fit the individualized institution is acknowledged as advantageous in the restorative movement, but it nonetheless makes any meaningful evaluation difficult. Simply monitoring one type of restorative program does not address the multiple models existing in schools.

Despite the support from leading restorative advocates on the advantages of a whole-school approach, there is little research on the core components (reactive and proactive practices) independently. By evaluating the three different models separately, it is possible to identify if RA influences happiness and/or school engagement, and assess which model is most effective. For both of the areas of well-being examined, there are possible pathways in which the three different models of RA could have the potential to positively influence the outcomes.

3 | PATHWAYS TO HAPPINESS AND SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

Happiness (or subjective well-being; see Demir & Weitekamp, 2007) is a generalized term used to describe the affective and cognitive evaluations of one's life (Diener, 2000). There is a newly found importance placed on happiness, partly a result of recent government legislation (for example, the Welsh Government Social Services and Well-being Act 2016, Wales), creating optimal circumstances for interventions to flourish, such as restorative programs in schools. However, the utility of restorative programs and their influence on happiness lacks empirical support. RA training organizations and schools routinely suggest that RA implementation improves happiness, with statements such as: “students say they are happier” (Davis, 2013). Empirical evidence to support such assertions is difficult to establish, either due to their anecdotal nature or to the fact that it is unclear what type of RA practices are responsible for any change (if at all).

At a broad level, a school's primary purpose is to: “[...] ensure children master academic skills and achieve scholastically” (Ladd, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Visconti, & Ettekal, 2012, p. 11). To achieve this, schools need to promote proschool behaviors and/or decrease antisocial conduct. In some commentaries, this is how RA found its niche in the education sector (Morrison, 2011). The most common reports of successful RA implementation find decreased negative behavior, improved grades, and better attendance. However, there is little evidence to suggest how and why these positive transitions actually transpire. From a psychological perspective, happiness is directly associated with similar behaviors and could, therefore, provide the psychological “link” that explains why behavior improves after RA introduction (Huebner & Diener, 2008; Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013).

There are several factors that contribute to overall happiness in children; surprisingly, demographic factors only contribute a relatively minor portion of children's levels of well-being (Gilman & Hueber, 2003). Holder and Coleman (2008) conclude that income is not a significant predictor of happiness, even when children are aware of their socioeconomic status. Additionally, intelligence (and subsequent educational ability) is largely unrelated to happiness levels in children (Huebner & Alderman, 1993), indicating that there are additional factors that play a more significant role in happiness levels. Some of these additional elements are areas schools have the ability to influence, such as building positive relationships and increasing student participation (Fordyce, 1977;

Huebner & Diener, 2008; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005). These pathways to happiness fit well into the claims of RA's positive influence on happiness, as such approaches focus on the importance of positive relationships and participant ownership.

RA also fits well into intervention programs aimed at improving school engagement. School engagement is generally defined as a student's identification with and their corresponding participation in school (Willms, 2003). The focus on school engagement dates back to the 1980s field of *drop out* intervention programs largely found in the United States (Finn, 1989), but interest has reignited within the last decade seeing a resurgence of specific school engagement research worldwide. The proliferation of engagement research stems from the positive effects engaged students are likely to experience, including increased academic performance, behavior self-regulation and motivation, wider enjoyment in challenges and learning in general (Klem & Connell, 2004).

Authors routinely emphasize the critical nature of engagement to successful schooling with some going as far as to state: "[...] engagement is the direct (and only) pathway to cumulative learning, long-term achievement, and eventual academic success" (Skinner & Pitzer, 2013, p. 23). Additionally, school engagement impacts not only upon academic achievement, but also acts as a protective factor against risky behaviors, delinquency, and school failure (Klem & Connell, 2004). Furthermore, students with multiple risk factors for school dropout are more likely to achieve success in school if they present with higher engagement levels (Finn & Rock, 1997). The mediating variable of engagement has a strong predictive power among those populations with several demographic risk factors.

The influx of school engagement interventions is not only due to the many beneficial outcomes engaged students experience, it also rests on the fact that it is in general a malleable construct and is heavily context dependent, encompassing affective connections with the surrounding interactive school environment (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Raftery, Grolnick, & Flamm, 2013). The school environment heavily influences engagement measures, and education reform emphasizes the importance of enhancing opportunities for students to participate in decision-making, in a more bidirectional model of education (Smythe, 2006). Hence, allowing pupils the opportunity to express themselves and influence decisions about their learning improves engagement by providing practical opportunities for participation, as well as increasing the sense of both ownership and attachment to the organization (Mitra, 2009). By altering the view of students as passive recipients of knowledge to active participants, it also replaces the hierarchical relationship with a collaborative partnership between the staff and students, further improving staff-student relationships (Ruddock, 2007).

Research supports the notion that school engagement is highly influenced by contextual factors, particularly levels of participation and staff-student relationships, mediated through an active student voice (Fielding, 2007). Both proactive and reactive RA practices have a large role in creating an effective student voice in schools as they promote active participation in both schools and in restorative processes specifically, resulting in the creation of more effective learning environments and a forward looking focus (Acosta et al., 2016; Hendry, Hopkins, & Steele, 2014; Hopkins, 2010; Morrison, 2011). Despite the fact that more support is needed to substantiate the claim that RA positively influences school engagement, any program focusing on relationships and student voice is a promising prospect.

The restorative literature routinely points to the improvement of participant well-being, including both happiness and school engagement, after RA implementation. Based on previous intervention research, happiness and engagement levels should be psychological constructs responsive to RA programs in schools. The principles of RA, including proactive and reactive practices, involve repairing and restoring relationships in schools and improving student participation (Macready, 2009). Furthermore, RA practices encourage positive communities that promote healthy relationships, while reacting to negative behavior with restorative principles that help to recognize consequences and improve

relationships damaged by conflict (Gonzalez, 2012). Thus, theoretically, both proactive and reactive practices have the potential to positively influence levels of happiness and school engagement through the improvement of relationships and levels of participation in school.

4 | RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGIES

4.1 | Description of study sites and use of RA practices

The present research evaluates two separate local authorities (LA) across three schools. In both School 1 and School 2, the YOT RA officers were based in the schools for two full days a week. Both schools trained all staff members to a minimal level during the first in-service day and held an awareness campaign consisting of presentations to both staff members and students. School 1 chose a reactive-only model of RA, consisting of initial meetings, restorative conferences, and follow-up meetings, largely following a similar path to established mediation guidelines. Hanson and Umbreit (2018) describe the process in four steps: (a) the initial intake and dialogue between the facilitator and the participant, (b) in-depth discussion between the facilitator and the participant regarding the process and expectations, (c) the restorative conference, and (d) follow-up meetings. The process length varied in School 1 between participants, ranging from one to approximately 46 weeks.

School 2 maintained their whole-school (proactive and reactive practices) ambitions, although it was later discovered that very little formal RA conferencing took place and the proactive practices were limited in scope. Instead, this school utilized both types of practices but to a lesser degree and often informal manner. There was very little documentation available to monitor the reactive practices utilized and school observations demonstrated the inconsistent use of preventative practices in general.

The LA2 YOT staff at School 3 adopted a hybrid of proactive classroom practices and a whole-school approach. In this model, the RA Officer's main role was to train the staff members in proactive classroom practices. Once all members of staff were trained to this level, principally during school in-service days, subsequent evening sessions were made available to those who wished to pursue further instruction on restorative practices. In this implementation style, the RA Officer had very little contact with students and RA was embedded in the school only through staff usage. Thus, classroom staff were mainly responsible for the delivery of the practices. Interestingly, all three schools elected to maintain the use of the original behavior management system already established.

4.2 | Research design

Empirical evaluations of RA implementation can be challenging due to the often idiosyncratic way in which these policies and procedures are interpreted and operationalized (Daly, 2016). However, this flexibility is not necessarily negative; schools are able to tailor the programs to suit the needs of the organization and participants, but later evaluating what has worked and how can be problematic (Doak & O'Mahony, 2006). The schools were located in two neighboring areas with similar demographic factors, school structures, and size. Despite the similarities, this research developed two different research designs to account for the diversity of restorative practices in use (See Figure 1).

The most illustrative method for evaluating the impact of any initiative is the experimental before-after research design, which allows the influence of the intervening variable (or the intervention) to be easily identified (Sedgwick, 2014). In this research, School 1 implemented formal reactive practices; as a result, it was possible to follow specific students throughout the process. Thus, a

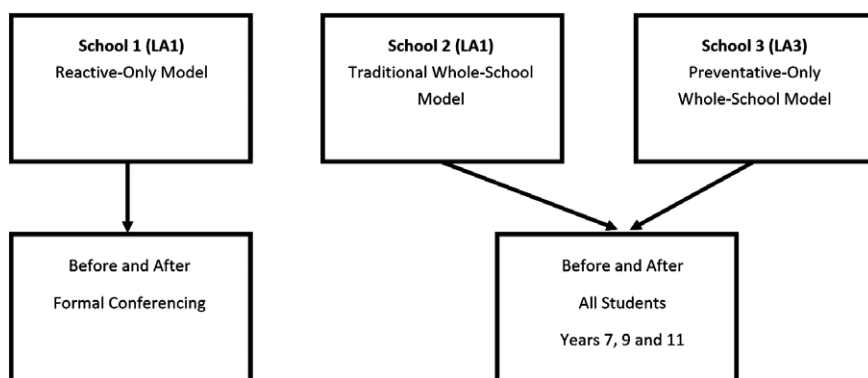


FIGURE 1 Summary of research design

before and after research design was employed to monitor any changes in happiness and school engagement for individual participants. In contrast, School 2 and 3 did not rely on formal conferencing, meaning a before and after design with specific participants was inappropriate and unrealizable. The research designs in Schools 2 (*traditional whole-school approach*) and 3 (*proactive-only whole-school approach*) were primarily the same in implementation: utilizing a linked cross-sectional design, rather than a pure repeated measures procedure.

4.3 | Sample

School 1 utilized reactive-only practices facilitated by the RA Officer. The restorative process in this school included a full conference, including preparatory and follow up meetings. In most cases, a number of further meetings were held between the RA officer and the transgressor, subsequent to the actual conference. Often these involved targeted social and emotional development sessions between the officer and student.

Cases were considered “open” the first day the initial meeting took place between the facilitator and the participant and during this first meeting the initial questionnaire was administered by the RA officer. Referrals were “closed” the day the facilitator completed the final follow-up meeting; during this final meeting, the second questionnaire was administered, again by the RA officer. The participants involved in this research were considered the “transgressors” in the conflict, which had resulted in the referral to the RA officer in the first instance.

The RA officer in School 1 received 28 referred cases during the research period. From these 28 cases, the researcher was able to obtain a total of 19 completed before and after questionnaires. From those that were unsuitable for analysis, there were eight instances where the conflict could not be resolved and the case withdrawn and one case where the consent from the student and/or parent was not given. The sample was divided between 15 males and 4 female participants.

In both Schools 2 and 3, due to the size of the schools (approximately 900 students respectively), it was decided that sampling a range of years in the main school was most appropriate. The first year of secondary school (Year 7), a middle year (Year 9), and the last year before sixth form (Year 11) were sufficient to get a large sample as well as a broad age range throughout the school. Initial questionnaire administration occurred intentionally during the beginning of the autumn term of the academic year to obtain baseline results. The final questionnaire administration took place during winter term the following year, leaving approximately 18 months for the RA practices to embed within the school.

School 2 had a total of 470 student responses over the two data collection periods (Time 1 = 289; Time 2 = 181). Whereas School 3 had 583 responses over the two waves of data collection (Time 1 = 307; Time 2 = 276).

4.4 | Instrumentation

Evaluation of traditional outcome measures does not convey the genuine impact restorative programs may have on a school as a whole or for individual students or staff. Firstly, focusing on outcomes such as improved attendance does not explain the underlying motivating factors behind the behavior, such as improvement in well-being. Secondly, schools in the LA in this research prioritize attendance on a daily basis, as such there is little variation in attendance rates. Additionally, exclusions are rare and only used in very extreme cases. Thus, presenting such data would be misrepresentative of the true potential impact of the restorative programs.

The current study utilized two psychometric scales as the main measures of the outcomes of the restorative programs:

1. *Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)* (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999)
2. *School Engagement Scale (SES)* (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, Friedel, & Paris, 2005)

4.4.1 | Measuring happiness

Despite the widespread usage of the term, this psychological construct is complex and multifaceted. The term “happiness” describes a range of subdivisions including people's emotional responses or affect (positive and negative), satisfaction evaluations (life and domain specific), and judgment levels (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). In general, the majority of measurements focus on either global life satisfaction in a single-item evaluation or measure the cognitive or affective domains separately (Diener, 1984). The present research utilizes Lyubomirsky and Lepper's (1999) SHS, which includes both the global assessment of subjective cognitive judgments and affective evaluations of one's life in one measurement tool.

The SHS is validated by 14 separate studies with a total of 2,732 participants from varied settings including high schools, colleges, and community samples (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999). The student age (high school and college) ranges from 14–28 years old, whereas the community age ranges from 20–94 years old. The scale was found to have excellent reliability and construct validity for all age ranges.

4.4.2 | Measuring school engagement

School engagement measurement has long been tied to levels of time dedicated to academic tasks, which are referred to as behavioral engagement. This definition is slowly changing to include a more encompassing view of engagement, including social, psychological, and cognitive elements. At a minimum, engagement includes behaviors related to participation in schools and some type of affective component (Finn, 1989).

The SES combines three components: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement, as described by Fredericks et al. (2005). Historically, these three areas of engagement were studied separately resulting in many singular measures to gauge each individually. However, the SES reflects the growing body of research that find engagement subtypes are more likely to overlap.

4.5 | Analysis

The reactive-only implementation style favored by School 1 required the use of inferential statistics to establish any significant differences between Time 1 and Time 2. In addition, to fully explore the interactions of the key evaluation metrics (happiness and school engagement) a comparison of schools is necessary to establish any mean differences in outcome scores between the traditional whole school approach (School 2) and the proactive-only implementation model (School 3). Data were analyzed to establish what changes (if any) occurred within the schools with regard to the outcome variables. A 2×2 between subject analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the means of both schools at two separate times: scores were the dependent variables and the two different schools were the grouping/independent variables. The results illustrate the overall trends between schools at the two different times.

4.6 | Results: School 1

4.6.1 | School 1

The Before-After evaluation required the use of dependent sample t-tests to establish any significant differences between Time 1 and Time 2:

Happiness: There was no significant difference in mean happiness scores between Time 1 ($M = 4.842$, $SD = 1.00$) and Time 2 ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.813$) ($t = 1.008$, $p = 0.327$).

School Engagement: There was no significant difference in school engagement scores between Time 1 ($M = 2.628$, $SD = 0.4875$) and Time 2 ($M = 2.659$, $SD = 0.364$) ($t = -0.494$; $p = 0.627$).

It was also considered if the length of time a referral was “open” and the two key evaluation variables were related (indicating more meetings with the RA facilitator; the duration of referrals lasted between 6 and 309 days). However, no correlations were found between the referral length and happiness and school engagement (happiness $r = -0.186$, $p = 0.446$; school engagement $r = -0.122$, $p = 0.618$). Hence, the number of meetings with the RA facilitator did not appear to affect the key evaluation indices.

4.7 | Comparative analysis: Schools 2 and 3

Results from the 2×2 between subject analysis of variance illustrated interesting trends between schools at the two different times. Firstly, there was a significant interaction between the Time (first and second questionnaire administration) and happiness ($F[1, 999] = 3.902$, $p = 0.048$) and school engagement scores ($F[1, 999] = 4.074$, $p = 0.044$). These results suggest that happiness and school engagement scores depend on the time of the questionnaire administration in Schools 2 and 3.

The analysis of the main effects found that the “School”, rather than the “Time” was the most significant factor. The time of administration within each school for each of the two variables did not produce significant results at this level. However, the main effects of the school on happiness and school engagement were significant. The mean happiness scores for School 2 were higher than that of School 3 (T1); at the final questionnaire administration School 3 improved their scores, whereas there was a decline found in School 2 ($F[1, 999] = 14.715$, $p = 0.001$). Thus, the net result was that the two scores moved closer toward each other over time, thereby, reducing the difference in mean scores between T1 and T2.

The difference in mean scores for school engagement saw the opposite effect. Although School 2 and School 3 began with a very small difference in mean scores, this gap grew as School 2's scores

decreased and School 3's scores increased over time. Therefore, the difference between the two schools increased between T1 and T2 ($F[1, 999] = 5.816, p = 0.016$).

The results indicate a difference in scores between the two schools and a general downward trend of both outcome variables in School 2, whereas School 3 saw a small but clear improvement in scores over time. Overall, this analysis concluded that the school rather than the elapse of time between the two questionnaire administrations was the strongest factor influencing the scores of happiness and school engagement.

5 | DISCUSSION

The reactive-only RA model favored in School 1—including preparatory and follow up meetings, as well as formal conferencing itself—did not develop sufficiently to significantly influence happiness or school engagement scores over the time periods used in this analysis. The testing of individual participants in formal RA processes did not yield any significant changes, an interesting finding in itself considering the ubiquitous nature of this practice. Despite the use of the archetypal restorative conference, it was unlikely that the program could elicit enduring changes when most students spend the majority of their time in an environment that did not necessarily support the fundamental changes learned within the conferencing. The scale and approach in which RA operated did not have the necessary support from the school to establish any lasting changes in the participants. The discord between the established school culture and the changes needed for RA programs to flourish resulted in a very limited ability of RA to make any difference to outcomes of the participants. Both Sellman (2014) and McCall (2014) concur that it would be difficult for students to apply any learning gained from a reactive-only RA process due to a clash between the new learning (gained from the RA process) and the traditional culture found in the wider school setting:

Long term success depends upon the capacity of the particular individuals involved to understand and integrate the lessons contained within the [RA] process. It will be harder for students to understand and integrate such learning if the values and skills associated with the process are not reflected and reinforced in wider school culture (McCall, 2014, p. 233).

Furthermore, Sherman and Strang (2007, p. 55) also recognize the limitations of a reactive-only approach and found: “[...] using restorative conferencing for specific incidents, isolated from other restorative practices, appears to have limited value for school conduct generally”. Despite the fact that the reactive-only model implemented in School 1 promoted student participation and focused on repairing relationships damaged during a conflict, it did not produce a lasting impact on the outcome measures. The current research supports the literature, in that it is unlikely that a reactive-only model of RA could make a positive impact on either happiness or school engagement. However, the static outcome measures do indicate an important finding in that reactive practices are not harmful to student well-being as may be the case with more punitive behavior management strategies (Ortega, Lyubansky, Nettles, & Espelage, 2016).

In general, there is much less discussion on proactive-only programs, as seen in School 3, although McCall (2014) briefly considers such a proposal and states that a proactive-only program faces similar limitations to that of a reactive-only implementation, and thus will not produce successful results:

By the same token, whether a school can succeed in developing the caring culture necessary to equip students as both citizens of the here and now as well as the future depends on whether such lessons are reflected and reinforced by the school's behaviour management system. A student who learns and expects to be involved with decision-making will quickly become disillusioned if their behaviour is responded to arbitrarily and punitively (McCall, 2014, p. 233).

Again, McCall (2014) asserts that schools that only focus on changing a school culture via positive classroom practices, while maintaining a punitive behavior management system, cannot succeed in a restorative sense. Hence, a punitive behavior management system and the restorative culture promoted in classrooms have at their core two divergent principles. School 3 chose to implement a proactive-only program, which, based on McCall's assertions, should have been less successful. However, a positive trend for both happiness and school engagement was evident. These findings lend support to the success of such an approach, thus, conflicting with McCall's negative predictions of a proactive-only RA model.

School 3 (*proactive-only model*) made great efforts to embed consistent proactive practices, such as establishing positive communication strategies between staff and students within the everyday discourse of school interactions, utilizing enquiring questions, and student-led participation strategies, resulting in improved classroom communication. Improved communication strategies are a common element of successful restorative models and are noted as a key aspect to embedding restorative principles throughout a school (González et al., 2018). Despite maintaining the traditional behavior management system, the staff and students did not perceive the clash between the emerging restoratively based school culture and the punitive system as described by McCall (2014). This may be a result of the high levels of consistent restorative practices found throughout the school, unlike the arbitrary punitiveness McCall stated would result from this type of implementation model. Other authors also voice additional concerns over this type of model, such as Ashworth (2002), who suggests that restorative values will begin to erode over time, resulting in a return to punitive systems. This is one potential future concern for this school and an issue that needs further consideration. However, by the end of the research period, restorative classroom practices were still dominant and had not eroded, although it is acknowledged that this is a possibility in the future.

Despite certain criticisms of an implementation approach that attempts to integrate restorative values via classroom practices into an already established school culture (whilst still maintaining the established punitive system), the proactive-only whole-school approach, as seen in School 3, resulted in more positive outcomes than both School 1 and 2. This result leads to the question as to why the traditional whole-school model of RA (School 2) did not positively impact on the outcome measures, as would be the natural assumption based on the literature (Hopkins, 2002; McCall, 2014). In School 2, similar to School 1, there were only pockets of use, where some teachers utilized informal reactive practices (as opposed to the formal conferencing seen in School 1) and limited proactive practices. Although this school did have both reactive and proactive practices, fitting the description of a traditional whole-school model, they were more informally and less consistently enforced compared to both Schools 1 and 3. This is not a unique outcome and several evaluations have noted that both whole-school ambitions are difficult to achieve and, if achieved, are difficult to sustain over time (Shaw, 2007; Youth Justice Board for England and Wales, 2004).

School 3 (*proactive-only model*) applied the rules of the school consistently and made use of school-wide strategies, with little evidence of bias towards specific groups or members of the student population. In contrast, classroom observations point toward inconsistent practices throughout School 2. This supports the significance of applying consistent school-wide classroom-based policies.

The initial findings in School 3 provide support that RA can produce positive changes in both happiness and school engagement. However, there are concerns that these positive trends may not be due to RA *per se*. Whole-school approaches are not unique to the restorative movement and educational literature states that clear and consistent policies and rules throughout a school are just as important, or even more so, than the type of behavior management style or intervention in place (Rogers, 1995). School-wide proactive practices (not necessarily restorative-based) are documented as having an overall positive impact on outcome measures such as school climate and frequency of negative behaviors (Mayer, 1995; Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1994). In general, whole-school approaches to behavior management lead to increased school engagement and decreased classroom disruption (Sugai & Horner, 2002), and this strategy is recognized as providing the strongest foundation for lasting positive change in a school. Therefore, based on previous educational literature, it is not surprising that a systematically implemented RA proactive-only whole-school model produced the most positive results (Although from the RA literature's position, this is an unlikely model to adopt). It is the position of this research that although RA principles are the underlying impetus, it is likely that most consistently implemented whole-school models would also produce similar results.

School 3 implemented a proactive-only whole-school program, although not the traditional whole-school approach usually advocated, it still produced the necessary environment to initiate the beginning of change in happiness and engagement. This preliminary research finds that different models of RA impact on participant well-being to different degrees, depending on the consistency of implementation.

Initial thoughts point to the importance of consistent school-wide practices as the stimulus to initiate positive trends in both happiness and engagement, via the improvement of staff-student relationships (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Consistent practices also are integral to eliciting the restorative mechanism referred to as procedural justice. Procedural justice is generally described as procedures that those involved perceive to be fair. Murphy and Tyler (2008, p. 652) state that “if authorities treat people with trust, fairness, respect and neutrality, people will not only be more willing to cooperate with authorities, but will also be more likely to comply with authority decisions and rules.” Procedural justice plays a central role in restorative practice and predicts that all parties will consider the conflict resolution as fair, despite outcome favorability. The importance of procedural justice to organizational policy has a wide reaching impact, particularly on issues such as future rule-abiding behavior and importantly participant well-being (Murphy & Tyler, 2008; Tyler, 2006; Tyler & Blader, 2003). Thus, it is likely that consistent practices established in School 3 tapped into the underlying restorative mechanism of procedural justice.

6 | CONCLUSION

Previous research by schools, restorative trainers, and advocates has suggested there is a positive impact from RA on measures related to well-being; however, there has often been little empirical data to support these claims. The present research specifically measures potential changes in these psychological constructs over a period of time (using validated psychometric scales) to establish links between RA implementation and the impact upon happiness and school engagement. There were limited significant findings relating to changes in the outcome measures (happiness and school engagement) in each school over time; however, a comparison of both School 2 (traditional whole-school approach) and School 3 (proactive-only whole-school approach) did record a significant difference in happiness and school engagement between these two settings. The quantitative outcomes indicate a level of difference between schools and the unlikely benefits of a proactive-only module. However,

further research is needed to more thoroughly address the underlying reasons generating the variations in outcomes.

The main findings of this research uphold some of the wider assertions by advocates and researchers regarding positive changes in happiness and school engagement. However, further examination is needed to consider the differences in context between the schools and the potential of procedural justice as a driving mechanism of change.

7 | FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The results indicate that the less conventional model of RA is beneficial to participant well-being and likely due to the consistent school-wide implementation style; potentially initiating the mechanism of procedural justice, through the improvement of relationships and participation. This suggests that the specific “model” of RA implemented is less significant compared to the consistent school-wide manner in which it is implemented. These findings are important as a traditional whole school approach is generally more resource intensive to implement and difficult to achieve as compared to a proactive-only whole-school model. The research into alternative whole-school approaches is beneficial to those schools without the financial resources needed to establish the traditional whole-school restorative model.

There are two future streams of research needed to address additional questions the present research highlights. Drawing from Hanson and Umbreit's (2018) call for a second wave of research to contextualize findings from evaluation research, future work will consider both the relationship between happiness and school engagement and also the likely influential factors within an educational setting. Importantly, the significance of relationships and degree of student participation to the underlying mechanism of procedural justice as mediating factors of well-being measures also needs further consideration.

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